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SOME NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENTS IN HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

A radio talk by Miss Edith L. Mason, State Home Demonstration Leader, Storrs, Connecticut, delivered in the Home Demonstration radio program, December 12, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations.

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Today Connecticut brings greetings and good wishes to the Farm and Home audience. We are asked to tell you of some noteworthy achievements in Home Demonstration Work in our state this year. I have been wondering what you would most like to know about.

Perhaps I should first show you a sketchy picture of our Connecticut farm homes. As you all know our state is small. Our farms are small though our farm houses are sizable or large. They are scattered over beautiful rolling country on hills and in valleys between the Massachusetts line and Long Island Sound. Few are more than thirty miles distant from a city, large or small. We have suffered no major disasters, but we are emerging, we hope, from some lean years. We have, then, no spectacular achievement to report. The business of our women has been to carry on and carry on with what buoyancy of spirit they could muster with very little cash jingling in their pockets. We have had to consider and practice again the thrifty manners and customs of our forebears. Have we then a story of real interest for you today? If you ask for drama - no; if you care for the story of how our women are meeting the day-by-day problems of living - yes.

Have you by any chance heard a group discuss their housekeeping problems? With fifty percent, the ever-present problem is three meals a day. To the thinking woman today three meals does not mean just the serving of food; it means a balanced diet, that will provide for the family health, strength, and well-being. It means satisfaction, but more than that the day's meals must supply sufficient energy for maintenance and growth, the protective vitamins so essential to health, and all at a cost covered by a low food budget.

One interesting project which we have carried this year has been work on accounts and we have tried to make this the basis of other project work. An analysis of 71 home records showed that these families were spending an average of 21 or 22 cents daily for raw food materials for each person. In the past ten years good roads open the year around and nearness to markets that supplied green vegetables, fresh fruit, meat, and fish at a reasonable price has created the tendency to buy rather than raise and store produce. When cash permitted, this method saved the housewife much labor and was satisfactory, but when the milk check left little beyond payment of feed bills, something had to be done. Again it became economy for families to raise more of their living from the farm. The year has shown a marked increase in this direction. More vegetables have been raised and stored or canned, more chickens, beef and pork have been grown on the farm and used there.

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It is harder to get interest and variety in meals from home stored foods and considerable stress has been put on appetizing methods of preparing and serving the home grown and home preserved products. For example, the lowly cabbage appears on the table in cole slaw, in salad with pineapple, or cooked and delicately seasoned with butter, or scalloped au gratin, or in salad again with a golden crown of grated raw carrot, or decked for Christmas with strips of pimento and a gay sprinkle of paprika, or in a hundred ways that are rapidly becoming the secret of our housewives.

The accounts make it evident that most of the clothing must be made at home. At school, at church, at social gatherings, everyone wants to be attractively and comfortably dressed. To do it requires either money or skill. Hundreds of women and girls have had to develop skill in making or go without clothes, so they have flocked to clothing classes and made coats and dresses from old and new materials, smart clothes that anyone would be proud to wear, and at incredibly small expense. A woman recently said, "I haven't a dress in my closet that hasn't either been made or put in condition at a clothing meeting."

Some interesting community work has been done in landscaping of public buildings under the direction of the Extension Service. Here is an example: On October 20, 34 men from our community met to carry out the plan we had made to landscape the church. Six truck loads of good loam were used to fill and grade up to the foundation. Three truck loads of shrubs were dug from fields and used at the church. One hundred and six red and grey junipers and ground junipers were used and five maple trees set. The women served a noon lunch to the group.

In later comment the agent says, "It has been interesting to note the number of plantings around private homes that have followed this community work. People have gone to their pastures for shrubs and home grounds in the community show many changes."

These are a few of the means by which we feel that Connecticut women have built up a fine home demonstration program. In a period of low income our membership has increased in every county, attendance at meetings is good. This seems a substantial proof of the real value of work and is perhaps the most gratifying achievement we can report.

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